

Westport Affordable Housing Trust Virtual Regular Meeting of July 28, 2021

Participants: Chair Liz Collins (LC), Ann Boxler (AB), BettyAnn Mullins (BM), Henry Lanier (HL), David West (DW); Housing Specialist Leonardi Aray (LA), Recording Clerk Robert Barboza. Absent: James Sabra.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by the Chair, and commenced with notice that the meeting was being recorded, and the reading of the Governor's notice allowing remote participation meetings by public bodies.

1. The Chair led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chair advised Trust members and the public of her intent to continue meetings by remote participation via ZOOM meetings.

2. Minutes: The minutes of the June 30, 2021 meeting were reviewed. BM made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by HL. The motion passed on a 4-0-1 roll call vote: AB aye; BM aye; HL aye; DW abstain; LC aye.

3. Meeting Schedule: Noting there will be no regularly scheduled meeting in August, the Chair indicated the calendar of upcoming dates includes Sept. 22 and Oct. 27. November 24 would be the day before Thanksgiving, so an alternate date will be picked.

4. Executive Session to consider the purchase of real estate. Purpose: Under the provisions of Mass. General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21, to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Trust.

The Chair having declared that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Trust, she requested a motion to discuss the matter in executive session. Motion by HL at 4:07 p.m. to enter executive session, seconded by AB; the roll call vote was 5-0 in favor: HL aye; BM aye; DW aye; AB aye; LC aye.

Motion by AB at 4:21 p.m. to close the executive session and return to open meeting. Seconded by BM, the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; DW aye; AB aye; LC aye.

5. Financial Report: LA reviewed the financial report dated 7/21/21, noting it also serves as the draft budget for Fiscal Year 2022, starting July 1, 2021. With prior commitments deducted, the Trust has approximately \$690,000 available for allocation, so LA presented three scenarios for program funding, retaining office operations, HOPP and CRE-HAB programs, and acquisition and development funds. Using only available funds, Budget Scenario 1 would maintain current programs and operations, but create a \$115,000 shortfall; Budget Scenario 2 would maintain office operations but eliminate small scale development budget and HOPP funding; Budget Scenario 3 would maintain the office operation and reduce grant award for HOPP program to include moderate income buyers instead of low income buyers. He indicated the drawback of Scenario 3 was that the homes purchased by buyers up to 100 percent of AMI would not count on the Subsidized Housing Index. In all scenarios, the CRE-HAB program would continue with the nearly \$82,000 in recovered funds allocated for that purpose.

LC suggested that Scenario 3 would represent a change in Trust policy of working to help the neediest members of the community, and building the town's affordable housing numbers. She felt the priority

focus of the HOPP program should remain on lower income buyers. HL agreed that the grant program should continue to be offered to low income applicants, but also supports opportunities for moderate income buyers. He also noted the current lack of affordable homes in Westport for middle income buyers as well. LA indicated that the funding gap between market prices and affordable prices is growing, further limiting home ownership opportunities. DW noted that young professionals and town employees in that moderate low income category also need workforce housing opportunities, possibly in projects with local preferences negotiated. LA indicated that DHCD does not allow local preference restrictions on single-grant programs like HOPP; moderate income offerings don't require as much state approval or oversight, he added. He suggested a better option for the Trust would be to seek additional Community Preservation Act funding specifically for the HOPP program.

Current invoices were reviewed, with BM making a motion to approve payment of a voucher dated 7-2-21 totaling \$2,991.50 for invoices from Robert Barboza (\$594.00) and Leonardi Aray Associates (\$2,397.50). Seconded by AB, the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; DW aye; AB aye; LC aye.

HL made a motion to approve payment of a voucher dated 7-21-21 for \$100.00, a HOPP program inspection reimbursement. Seconded by BM, the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; DW aye; AB aye; LC aye.

6. BBAHFH Update: LA noted that the Trust had already voted to authorize the Chair to sign the documents necessary to complete the transfer of the property; and further voted to provide \$195,000 in Trust funds needed to complete the project. The next step is to sign the license needed for BBAHFH to access the property and engage in preliminary work at the site before the transfer is completed. There was general consensus that the license should be provided.

7. HAO Report: 1) LA was pleased to report that the HOPP grantee completed the purchase of her new home last week; it is the third affordable home purchased in Westport with HOPP grant assistance. 2) CRE-HAB 1904 – work specifications have been completed, and bids are being sought. 3) CRE-HAB 1903 – Still ongoing, with work on well continuing; all other work has been completed. 4) CRE-HAB FY 2022 - \$79,440 is available for the current fiscal year once approved grants are awarded. LA suggested the Trust consider increasing grant limits and assessed value limits; application deadlines need to be set. He also suggested the Trust consider cooperating with the Board of Health on their new septic repair loan program. 5) CPA Funding – Passed over. 6) High School Re-Use Plan – LA indicated there were no new developments, and LC suggested the Trust should formally express an interest in a possible re-use of the site for affordable or senior housing in a letter to the re-use committee. DW supported the sending of a letter of interest, which should include a list of Trust “accomplishments” to create and support affordable housing initiatives such as Noquochoke Village, the Sodom Road project with BBAHFH, and the HOPP purchases to demonstrate the Trust's track record. LA was tasked with drafting the letter. 7) Housing Development – LA noted there is \$200,000 in CPA funding earmarked for land acquisition in the current budget.

8. Ch. 61A Parcels: None.

9. CPA Funding Request – It was noted that Trust representatives will meet with the Community Preservation Committee on September 9 to discuss a possible funding request; LA will prepare a presentation. The last funding request was for \$247,000 for office operations and land acquisition, approved at the 2020 Annual Town Meeting; LA noted that \$400,000 was sought for land acquisition, and \$200,000 was recommended by CPC. LC noted that the next funding request will depend on what happens with the current land purchase negotiations.

10. Staff Contracts: The Chair reported that she has been talking to the staff about contract renewals, and will have a presentation on new contracts at the next Trust meeting.

With no other business on the agenda, AB made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Seconded by HL, the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; DW aye; AB aye; LC aye.

Minutes Approved: 9/22/21